

CLAIMS

1. Bridge apparatus for connecting a first multimaster bus I²C environment to a second multimaster bus I²C environment, comprising
 - an address bitmap having a value associated with each possible I²C address;
 - a port-A interface that receives address signals and data signals from the first multimaster and transmits data signals to the first multimaster bus;
 - a port-B interface that transmits address signals and data signals to the second multimaster bus and received data signals from the second multimaster bus; and
 - a controller that selectively passes an address and data received on the port-A interface from the first multimaster bus to the port-B interface for transmission on the second multimaster bus depending on the address bitmap value associated with the address.
2. The bridge apparatus of claim 1 wherein the controller comprises a command interpreter that receives commands at the port-A interface from the first multimaster bus and controls the operation of the bridge apparatus in response to received commands.
3. The bridge apparatus of claim 2 wherein a tunnel command received by the bridge apparatus includes a tunnel address and the controller passes the tunnel address to the port-B interface for transmission on the second multimaster bus.
4. The bridge apparatus of claim 2 further comprising a plurality of registers, each holding a value that control the operation of the bridge apparatus and wherein the command interpreter receives commands at the port-A interface from the first

- 4 multimaster bus and places a value in at least one of the registers in response
5 thereto.
- 1 5. The bridge apparatus of claim 4 wherein a first register holds a bridge ID value
2 and each command contains a bridge ID value and wherein the command
3 interpreter comprises a mechanism which responds to a command when the
4 bridge ID value therein equals the bridge ID in the first register.
- 1 6. The bridge apparatus of claim 5 wherein a second register defines a range of
2 bridge IDs and wherein the command interpreter comprises another mechanism
3 that transmits a received command on the second multimaster bus when the
4 bridge ID in the received command is in the range of bridge IDs.
- 1 7. The bridge apparatus of claim 1 wherein the controller is a programmed
2 microcontroller.
- 1 8. The bridge apparatus of claim 7 wherein the microcontroller comprises a RAM
2 memory wherein the address bitmap is located.
- 1 9. The bridge apparatus of claim 7 wherein the microcontroller is connected to the
2 port-A interface by a clock and data line and the microcontroller detects a START
3 signal by generating an interrupt based on a signal on the data line.
- 1 10. Bi-directional bridge apparatus for connecting a first multimaster bus I²C
2 environment and a second multimaster bus I²C environment, comprising
3 a first unidirectional bridge device having, a first address bitmap having a
4 value associated with each possible I²C address, a first port-A interface that
5 receives address and data signals from the first multimaster bus, a first port-B

6 interface that transmits address and data signals to the second multimaster bus;
7 and a first controller that selectively passes an address and data received on the
8 port-A interface from the first multimaster bus to the port-B interface for
9 transmission on the second multimaster bus depending on the first address
10 bitmap value associated with the address and

11 a second unidirectional bridge device having, a second address bitmap
12 having a value associated with each possible I²C address, a second port-A
13 interface that receives address and data signals from the second multimaster
14 bus, a second port-B interface that transmits address and data signals to the first
15 multimaster bus; and a second controller that selectively passes an address and
16 data received on the port-A interface from the second multimaster bus to the
17 port-B interface for transmission on the first multimaster bus depending on the
18 second address bitmap value associated with the address.

1 11. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 10 wherein both the first and second
2 unidirectional bridge devices have a mechanism for designating whether a
3 unidirectional bridge device is one of an upstream bridge and a downstream
4 bridge.

1 12. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 10 further comprising a deadlock
2 mechanism for choosing one of the unidirectional bridge devices when both
3 unidirectional bridge devices simultaneously begin a transaction.

1 13. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 10 wherein the first unidirectional
2 bridge device further comprises a plurality of registers, each holding a value that
3 control the operation of the first unidirectional bridge device and wherein the first
4 controller comprises a first command interpreter that receives commands at the
5 port-A interface from the first multimaster bus and places a value in at least one
6 of the registers in response thereto.

- 1 14. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 13 wherein each of the commands
2 contains a bridge ID and at least one of the registers defines a range of bridge
3 IDs and wherein the first command interpreter comprises a mechanism that
4 transmits a received command on the second multimaster bus when the bridge
5 ID in the received command is in the range of bridge IDs.
- 1 15. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 10 wherein the second unidirectional
2 bridge device further comprises a plurality of registers, each holding a value that
3 control the operation of the second unidirectional bridge device and wherein the
4 second controller comprises a second command interpreter that receives
5 commands at the port-A interface from the second multimaster bus and places a
6 value in at least one of the registers in response thereto.
- 1 16. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 15 wherein each of the commands
2 contains a bridge ID and at least one of the registers defines a range of bridge
3 IDs and wherein the second command interpreter comprises a mechanism that
4 transmits a received command on the first multimaster bus when the bridge ID in
5 the received command is outside the range of bridge IDs.
- 1 17. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 15 wherein a register in the first
2 unidirectional bridge device holds a first bridge ID value and a register in the
3 second unidirectional bridge device holds a second bridge value different from
4 the first bridge ID value.
- 1 18. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 13 wherein each command contains
2 a bridge ID value and wherein the first command interpreter comprises a
3 mechanism which responds to a command when the bridge ID value therein
4 equals the bridge ID in the first register.

1 19. The bi-directional bridge apparatus of claim 17 wherein each command contains
2 a bridge ID value and wherein the second command interpreter comprises a
3 mechanism which responds to a command when the bridge ID value therein
4 equals the bridge ID in the first register.

1 20. A method for connecting a first multimaster bus I²C environment to a second
2 multimaster bus I²C environment, comprising
3 (a) connecting the first multimaster bus to the second multimaster bus with a
4 bridge having an address bitmap having a value associated with each
5 possible I²C address, a port-A interface that receives address signals and
6 data signals from the first multimaster and transmits data signals to the
7 first multimaster bus and a port-B interface that transmits address signals
8 and data signals to the second multimaster bus and received data signals
9 from the second multimaster bus; and
10 (b) selectively passing an address and data received on the port-A interface
11 from the first multimaster bus to the port-B interface for transmission on
12 the second multimaster bus depending on the address bitmap value
13 associated with the address.

1 21. The method of claim 20 wherein step (b) comprises receiving commands at the
2 port-A interface from the first multimaster bus and controlling the operation of the
3 bridge apparatus in response to received commands.

1 22. The method of claim 21 wherein a tunnel command received by the bridge
2 apparatus includes a tunnel address and wherein step (b) further comprises
3 passing the tunnel address to the port-B interface for transmission on the second
4 multimaster bus.

- 1 23. The method of claim 21 wherein the bridge further comprises a plurality of
2 registers, each holding a value that control the operation of the bridge apparatus
3 and wherein step (b) comprises receiving commands at the port-A interface from
4 the first multimaster bus and places a value in at least one of the registers in
5 response thereto.
- 1 24. The method of claim 23 wherein a first register holds a bridge ID value and each
2 command contains a bridge ID value and wherein step (b) comprises responding
3 to a command when the bridge ID value therein equals the bridge ID in the first
4 register.
- 1 25. The method of claim 24 wherein a second register defines a range of bridge IDs
2 and step (b) comprises transmitting a received command on the second
3 multimaster bus when the bridge ID in the received command is in the range of
4 bridge IDs.
- 1 26. The method of claim 20 wherein the bridge comprises a programmed
2 microcontroller that performs step (b).
- 1 27. The method of claim 26 wherein the microcontroller comprises a RAM memory
2 wherein the address bitmap is located.
- 1 28. The method of claim 26 wherein the microcontroller is connected to the port-A
2 interface by a clock and data line and the microcontroller detects a START signal
3 by generating an interrupt based on a signal on the data line.
- 1 29. A method for connecting a first multimaster bus I²C environment and a second
2 multimaster bus I²C environment, comprising

- 3 (a) connecting the first multimaster bus to the second multimaster bus with a
4 first unidirectional bridge device having, a first address bitmap having a
5 value associated with each possible I²C address, a first port-A interface
6 that receives address and data signals from the first multimaster bus, a
7 first port-B interface that transmits address and data signals to the second
8 multimaster bus;
- 9 (b) selectively passing an address and data received on the port-A interface
10 from the first multimaster bus to the port-B interface for transmission on
11 the second multimaster bus depending on the first address bitmap value
12 associated with the address;
- 13 (c) connecting the second multimaster bus to the first multimaster bus with a
14 second unidirectional bridge device having, a second address bitmap
15 having a value associated with each possible I²C address, a second port-
16 A interface that receives address and data signals from the second
17 multimaster bus, a second port-B interface that transmits address and
18 data signals to the first multimaster bus; and
- 19 (d) selectively passing an address and data received on the port-A interface
20 from the second multimaster bus to the port-B interface for transmission
21 on the first multimaster bus depending on the second address bitmap
22 value associated with the address.

1 30. The method of claim 29 wherein both the first and second unidirectional bridge
2 devices have a mechanism for designating whether a unidirectional bridge device
3 is one of an upstream bridge and a downstream bridge.

1 31. The method of claim 29 further comprising a deadlock mechanism for choosing
2 one of the unidirectional bridge devices when both unidirectional bridge devices
3 simultaneously begin a transaction.

- 1 32. The method of claim 29 wherein the first unidirectional bridge device further
2 comprises a plurality of registers, each holding a value that control the operation
3 of the first unidirectional bridge device and wherein step (b) comprises receiving
4 commands at the port-A interface from the first multimaster bus and placing a
5 value in at least one of the registers in response thereto.
- 1 33. The method of claim 32 wherein each of the commands contains a bridge ID and
2 at least one of the registers defines a range of bridge IDs and wherein step (b)
3 comprises transmitting a received command on the second multimaster bus
4 when the bridge ID in the received command is in the range of bridge IDs.
- 1 34. The method of claim 29 wherein the second unidirectional bridge device further
2 comprises a plurality of registers, each holding a value that control the operation
3 of the second unidirectional bridge device and wherein step (d) comprises
4 receiving commands at the port-A interface from the second multimaster bus and
5 placing a value in at least one of the registers in response thereto.
- 1 35. The method of claim 34 wherein each of the commands contains a bridge ID and
2 at least one of the registers defines a range of bridge IDs and wherein step (d)
3 comprises transmitting a received command on the first multimaster bus when
4 the bridge ID in the received command is outside the range of bridge IDs.
- 1 36. The method of claim 34 wherein a register in the first unidirectional bridge device
2 holds a first bridge ID value and a register in the second unidirectional bridge
3 device holds a second bridge value different from the first bridge ID value.

1 37. The method of claim 36 wherein each command contains a bridge ID value and
2 wherein step (b) comprises responding to a command when the bridge ID value
3 therein equals the bridge ID in the first register.

1 38. The method of claim 37 wherein each command contains a bridge ID value and
2 wherein step (d) comprises responding to a command when the bridge ID value
3 therein equals the bridge ID in the first register.